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## Montana Pupil Transportation News and Updates November 2004



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### 2005 MAPT Conference Information

The Montana Association for Pupil Transportation (MAPT) will hold their annual conference June 22, 23, 24, 2005 in Hamilton Montana.



As conference information becomes available, it will be posted on the OPI Pupil Transportation Web Site at [www.state.mt.us/pupiltransport](http://www.state.mt.us/pupiltransport). Click

on <Training>. Site chairman Matt Schultz said that he has a few surprises in store for conference attendees. The MAPT Board has been working hard to ensure that the 2005 conference will be a worthwhile learning experience for attendees. Conference fees will remain stable at \$75 per person and since it includes many of the meals and entertainment, it is an extremely cost effective way to earn the required 10 hours of school bus driver training for the year.

Make room reservations early as the MAPT Board believes the rooms won't last long. Be sure to mention the conference when you call the accommodation information numbers listed below:

Best Western	363-2142
Comfort Inn	363-6600
Deffy's Motel	363-1244
Holiday Inn Express	375-2525
REMLC's City Center	363-1651
Super 8	363-2940

### Since You Asked

#### *How is the school bus driver training program working for the drivers in Montana?*

In August, Townsend Public Schools hosted a day long driver training which included a great little bus road-e-o. Railroad Crossing Safety, Work Zone Safety and Winter Driving Classes, MBI (Behavior Training), and Reference Point Driving rounded out the day.

In September, the Kalispell area contractors held a day-long training session at the Kalispell Junior High. The contractors offered First Aid training, Blood Borne Pathogens, Special

Education, Montana Highway Patrol, the Roll-over bus, and much more.

Also in September, Poplar Public Schools and the Fort Peck Head Start co-hosted training for Poplar area drivers. Classes included Winter Driving, Work Place Safety, Pre and Post Trip Inspections, Student Evacuations, new FMVSS regulations, Standards review and a visit by the Montana Highway Patrol.

In October, Fromberg Public Schools hosted a safety training workshop. Classes included Operation Lifesaver, Winter Survival, Defensive Driving and a discussion regarding school bus accidents and how we deal with them.

I think these sessions have been extremely well attended and received. Drivers are seeing the benefits of spending time with their peers, learning new things and finding new ways to deal with old problems. Districts and Head Start Agencies are working together to provide quality training that meets the driver training requirements.



My heartfelt thanks go to Townsend Public Schools, Kalispell Public Schools, Poplar Public Schools, Fromberg Public Schools, Fort Peck Head Start, Rick Flink and his band of Operation Lifesavers, Dan Duenwald and Roger Lunde from Harlows' Bus Sales, Renee Shanks from Fromberg, Pam and Buzz Berry and the Kalispell area contractors, Doug Doty from OPI, Buffy and Larry Woodring from B & L Transfer in Townsend, Luke Avery, MAPT President, the men and women of the Montana Highway Patrol, Dave Majerus from Saco, Matt Schultz from Hamilton, Larry Revier from Plains, Steve Jenkins from Montana State University, Susan Court from OPI and all of the Blood Borne Pathogens trainers, Jack Welsh and Nick Clausen from I-State Truck Center, Darryl Werner from Poplar Public Schools, Carole Plymale and Evelyn Alley from Townsend, Greg Plante from the Fort Peck Head Start, Prudy Hulman from Department of Transportation and all of the Winter Driving and Work Zone Safety trainers and of course, the men and women who drive the yellow school bus and attend these workshops. It takes more than a village to keep our kids safe and these folks plus

countless others all do a wonderful job by donating time, effort, food, training tools, and facilities.

***How do we know that school districts are providing the necessary driver training?***

Page C-43 Driver In-service and Training Program, Section 4Ba states "In order to achieve the goal (of confident well-trained school bus drivers) the district shall develop and implement a driver training program that meets the needs of the school district and provides appropriate training to accomplish the goal. The plan shall, upon request, be available for inspection by the Office of Public Instruction."

The time has come to begin looking at the district plans and policies regarding school bus driver training. The OPI would like to help districts identify problems and find solutions



regarding the district bus driver training program. Beginning in December of 2004, the OPI will set in motion a random desk audit of these programs. I anticipate being able to look at 2 to 4 districts per month. A district clerk will receive a letter requesting a

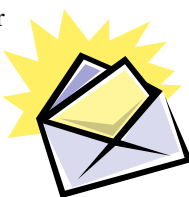
copy of the driver training program and a report of all drivers training activity that occurred during the 2003-2004 school year. The purpose of the first year's desk audits will be to identify and correct problem areas and communicate those to everyone so they can overcome any similar shortcomings. Deficiencies found in second year desk audits (2004-2005 driver training programs) could result in payment adjustments.

***Can school districts providing activity trips find a common place to put the list of students that are riding on the bus?***

I received several calls this month after an activity bus was involved in an accident. The calls were from first responders and they tell me that following an accident, things aren't always where they should be, people are often confused; and sometimes injuries don't allow folks to answer questions appropriately.

The people that are first on the scene need to be able to identify students quickly and account for everyone involved. First responders tell me that the student passenger lists can be found in the coach's notebook, a chaperone's pocket or on a clipboard behind the driver's seat and no one really knows where to look.

Usually, inside the bus there is a flat space above the windshield where the driver could easily attach a plastic pouch or a manila envelope. A little clear plastic tape would hold it. The envelope should be shorter than an 8 1/2" x 11" piece of paper. When the student passenger list is in the envelope, it should extend beyond the end of the envelope so that anyone needing it in a hurry can grab it quickly.



It is still a good idea for the coach to have a

copy of the student passenger list in the notebook so there are several copies available.

***What do I need a belt cutter for? My bus doesn't even have seat belts.***

All school bus drivers are required to wear their lap/shoulder belts. The only thing between the driver and the windshield is the lap/shoulder belt.



There was a bus accident in Cincinnati earlier this school year. The bus veered off the highway, tipped over and landed with the service doors on the down side. The driver was hanging in the lap/shoulder belt on the buckle side making it impossible to get the buckle undone and the belt cutter was lying on the service door where the driver couldn't reach it.



Every bus should have a belt cutter within reach of the driver at all times. Students had to cut this driver out of his seat so he could help them evacuate the bus.

***My child goes to a non-public school. Why won't the public school let her ride the school bus? They go right by our house.***

Montana Code Annotated (MCA) 20-10-123 Transporting Non Public School Children states: "Any child attending a nonpublic school may ride a school bus when a permit to ride such school bus is secured from the operating district by the parent or guardian of such nonpublic school child and when there is seating capacity available on such school bus. When a nonpublic school child rides a school bus, the operating district may charge such child his proportionate share, as determined by the trustees, of the cost of operating such school bus. Money realized from such payments shall be deposited to the credit of the transportation fund."



***Why can't you send out TR-35's anymore? OPI has always mailed them out before and frankly, "I like the Greenies."***

The TR-35 form or "greenies" will soon be available to enter data on-line. Districts will access the document with a password consistent with MAEFAIRS requirements. We are currently testing the new program.

Once the program is available, districts will be able to submit the TR-35 (driver certificate) electronically. When the electronic form is completed, districts will be able to print, copy, and submit the signed paper copy. The green four part form is no longer available.

The driver certification reports that are currently being mailed will be available to the districts from the new program. The OPI will make sure that the form is signed appropriately and data was entered correctly.

Please start thinking about who your registered user might be for this program. In a month or so, OPI will send out a registered user sign up sheet. More than one person could be using this program. For instance, the district clerk would work on Individual Transportation Contracts and do the claims while the transportation secretary might prepare the bus routes, handle the bus inspections and the transportation director would take care of the TR-35's. In this case, there could be three registered users for the program.

In addition, we are working on consolidating the bus information for transportation and for the bus depreciation fund. Denise Ulberg of OPI has been asking districts to provide the entire Vehicle Identification Number (VIN) for each yellow route bus and the cruisers that are currently owned by each school district. The next step for Denise is to gather the same information for all contracted route buses and cruisers. OPI staff will do the data entry for this piece to eliminate the extra work at the district level; however we do need help gathering the information.

There will be a gradual transfer from the two file system we utilize now to the single file system we will use in the future. Once the data entry project is completed, the transportation program will draw from the file to calculate rates and the bus depreciation fund will draw bus information from the same file to calculate depreciation. Districts will enter new bus information into either the transportation program or into MAEFAIRS. Contracted school buses will appear in the transportation program but not in MAEFAIRS. This effort is a one time only request for data and once we get the data entry done, it should be easy to maintain and update.

The yellow TR-13's (School Bus Inspection forms) will **not** be mailed for the second semester. They will be pre-filled and posted to the Transportation web site. When the forms are available, the clerks will receive an email with a link that will take them to the site. The new form has a check box for each entity that needs a copy. The districts will print the forms and request the inspection. Once the inspection is complete, the district will get the appropriate signature, make copies, check the box for the appropriate recipient and submit the original to the OPI. If you have any questions, please email Maxine at [mmougeot@state.mt.us](mailto:mmougeot@state.mt.us) or you can call (406) 444-3096.

### ***Railroad Grade Crossing Safety Violations, Penalties and Tips from the Montana Commercial Driver License Manual***

#### **The Violations are:**

##### **For drivers who are not required to always stop:**

- failing to slow down and check that the tracks are clear of an approaching train, and
- failing to stop before reaching the crossing if the tracks are not clear.

##### **For drivers who are required to always stop:**

- failing to stop before driving onto the crossing.

##### **For all drivers:**

- failing to have sufficient space to drive completely through the crossing without stopping,

- failing to obey a traffic control device or the directions of an enforcement official at the crossing , and
- failing to negotiate a crossing because of insufficient undercarriage clearance.

#### **The Penalties are:**

The Department of Justice shall suspend the Commercial Driver's License of a person who is convicted of a railroad grade crossing violation for:

- 60 days upon a first conviction,
- 120 days upon a second conviction within a 3-year period, or
- one year upon a third or subsequent violation within a 3-year period.

A person whose Commercial Drivers License is suspended under this section:

- is not eligible for a restricted probationary license; and
- may not operate a Commercial Motor Vehicle until the suspension is lifted and the person's Commercial Driver's License is restored.

#### **Rules to "Look, Listen and Live" By:**

Railroad crossings are always dangerous. Every such crossing must be approached with the expectation that a train is coming. Never attempt to race a train to a crossing. It is extremely difficult to judge the speed of an approaching train. Speed must be reduced in accordance with your ability to see approaching trains in any direction, and speed must be held to a point which will permit you to stop short of the tracks in case a stop is necessary. Because of noise in the cab, you cannot expect to hear the train horn until the train is dangerously close to the crossing. You should not rely solely upon the presence of warning signals, gates or flagmen to warn of the approach of trains.

Double tracks require a double check. Remember that a train on one track may hide a train on the other track. Look both ways and listen before crossing. After one train has cleared a crossing, be sure no other trains are near before starting across the tracks. Yard areas and grade crossings in cities and towns are just as dangerous as rural grade crossings. Approach them with as much caution.

A full stop is required at grade crossings whenever the nature of the cargo makes a stop mandatory under state or federal regulations or such a stop is otherwise required by law.

Railroad crossings with steep approaches can cause your vehicle to hang up on the tracks. NEVER permit traffic conditions to trap you in a position where you have to stop on the tracks. Be sure you can get all the way across the tracks before you start across. Do not shift gears while crossing railroad tracks.

If you are driving any vehicle, NEVER go around a railroad



crossing gate that is down. If the gate seems to be malfunctioning, don't proceed if driving a school bus. The only way to proceed is if a uniformed officer is available to direct traffic.

If there are no gates and the red lights are flashing, wait until the lights go off and the tracks are clear before proceeding. If these lights seem to be malfunctioning, it is ok to proceed once you know that the tracks are clear. School district policies can indicate that the district's school bus can't cross any tracks when warning devices are flashing. Best practice for student and school bus driver safety would indicate that another crossing should be utilized and the railroad company should be notified about the malfunctioning warning device. Drivers can notify dispatch to call the highway patrol or city police who have authority to help the driver get the bus through the crossing.



### ***Driver Fatigue and Student Safety***

Driver fatigue is a huge safety issue for both school districts and contractors. This risk can ultimately result in legal fees, loss in revenues, loss in human lives, costs including increased insurance rates, workers' compensation issues, medical bills, loss of driver and/or vehicle use, plus fines for employees exceeding the hours-of-service limits.



Fatigue is the condition of a person's mind and body, and how it affects that person's response to every day activities. Fatigue can be caused by many different things, including stress, sleep loss, excessive physical activity, biological rhythms and many factors beyond our control. Medication and alcohol can cause fatigue.

Each district and contractor should create a fatigue awareness promotion that would provide drivers with suggestions and operational strategies to help them combat fatigue while on the road. Consistent with safety recommendations from the national and state levels, districts could plan sporting events early enough in the day to get the students, drivers and school buses off the highway no later than 10:00 or 11:00 in the evening. When planning sporting events, districts should keep in mind that bars close at 2:00 a.m. which could add another risk element to the ride home. The later the ride home occurs, the higher the risk.

Drivers should understand and watch for the signs of fatigue. Districts should have an action plan to manage distances and hours of service in a way that avoids driving during a body's down time. Drivers need to recognize their own body's limitations and recognize the signs of sleepiness. Those signs include slowed reactions, sore eyes, blurred vision, and reduced concentration.

Make sure that the vehicle is well ventilated and not too hot or too cold. Don't use cruise control and take frequent breaks

if fatigue sets in. Wear sunglasses to reduce sun glare and get plenty of rest before a long trip.

By recognizing and understanding the signs of fatigue, drivers can take a major step toward making the roads safer for students, parents, and the motoring public.

### ***Safe Bus Routes and Stops***

A school bus route should be established with consideration to safety, economic soundness and convenience of operation. Road conditions, condition of bridges and culverts, hazardous railroad crossings and tracks, arterial highways, extreme weather conditions, length of route, turn-around points, the size of the bus and other related factors should dictate how routes are run. For instance, districts should encourage the bus drivers to make recommendations in regard to establishing or changing routes.

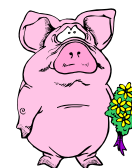
Bus routes should be planned to travel over graded, surfaced roads that are county maintained. Private roads can be used when prior approval has been received from the landowner, the trustees and the county transportation committee.

Bus stops should be chosen with the principle of safety in mind. Motorists approaching from either direction should have a clear view of the bus for a distance of at least three hundred (300) to five hundred (500) feet. Stops should not be made over the brow of a hill, on the outgoing end of a curve, on a blind curve, at a road intersection or on a steep grade. Students should have a safe place to wait with consideration given to snow plow activity, icy road conditions and traffic flow.

School loading and unloading zones are to be established and marked to provide safe and orderly loading and unloading of students. Student conduct in these areas should be the responsibility of the building principal.

### ***Quote of the Month***

"The difference between 'involvement' and 'commitment' is like an eggs-and-ham breakfast: the chicken was 'involved' - the pig was 'committed'." - unknown



### **PLEASE PROMPTLY RETURN TRAINING VIDEOS** **IMPORTANT DATES**

**November 23, 2003** Final positive adjustments will be made for 2003-2004 Transportation Reimbursements

**By November 30, 2004** TR-13's (Bus Inspection Forms) will be pre-printed and posted to the Transportation Web site

**By November 30, 2004** TR-4's daily rates will be corrected and re-posted to the Transportation Web site

**June 22, 23, 24, 2004** MAPT Conference – Hamilton, Montana – Contact Betty Kunkel at (406) 454-6776

**Update bus driver certificates, bus inspection forms, route information and transportation contracts regularly.**